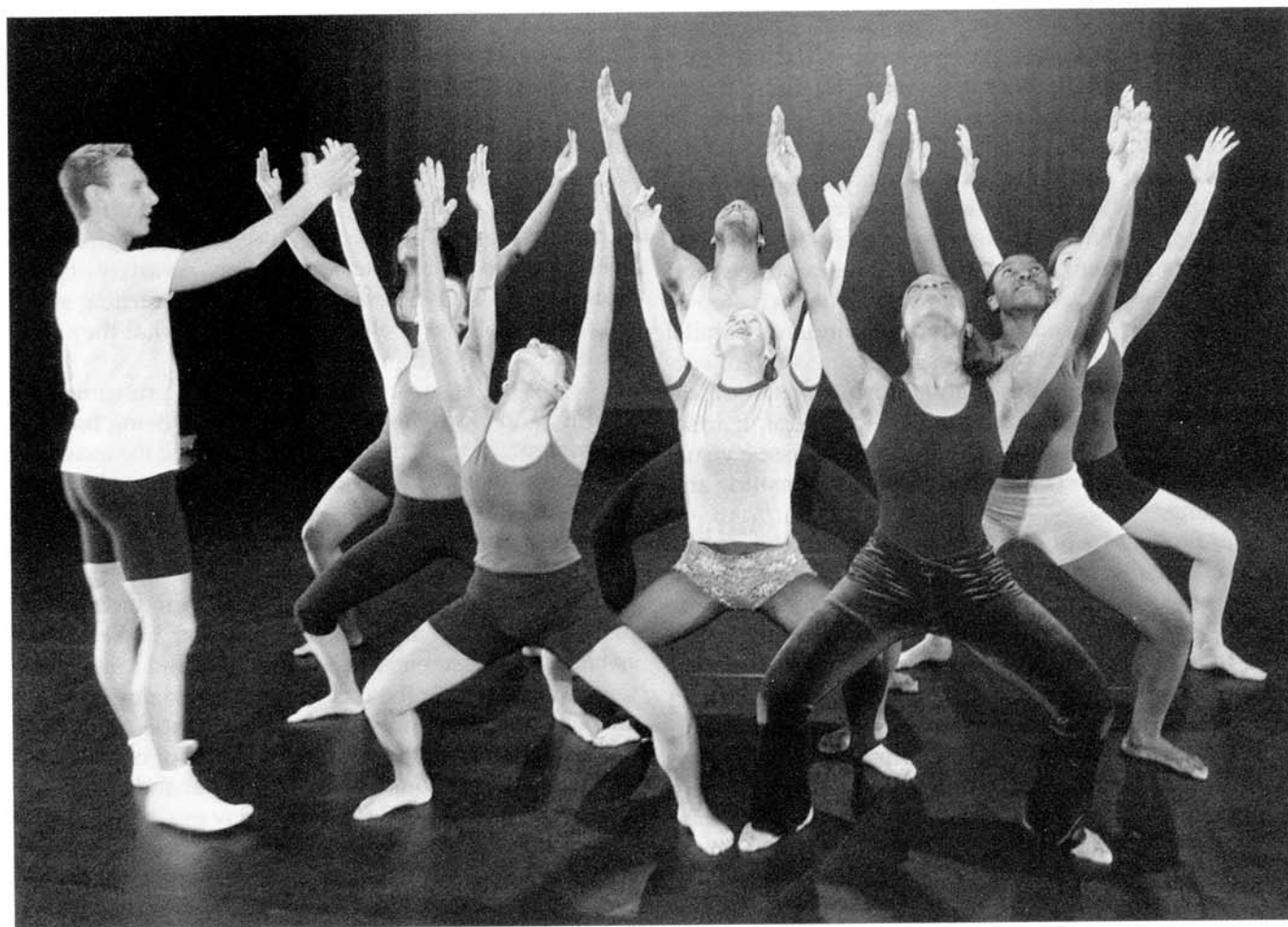


Arts Assessment
Restrictions On Content: Religious Art And Censorship
Dealing With Controversial Issues
Education Vs. Entertainment
Accessing Community Arts Resources
Equity Issues In The Arts
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Design Education: Connections With Art Education And Other Disciplines



The purpose of this chapter is to raise some of the key issues that face school districts which seek to develop quality arts programs, and to provide suggestions and recommended references that may be of help in resolving those issues.

Arts Assessment

Assessment plays an essential role in developing, maintaining and improving effective arts programs. Once teachers have developed a curriculum that establishes clear expectations for student learning (objectives or outcomes) by specifying what their students need to know and be able to do, they must assess how well students are learning, then strive to increase that learning by improving instruction. Assessment also enables schools to determine which types of teacher in-service activities are necessary, where additional resources may be needed and which changes may be appropriate in the curriculum.

Effective arts teachers always have assessed their students, determining how well individual students are progressing and adapting instruction to meet their needs. Such assessment, however, often has been sporadic rather than systematic, focusing only on a few areas of arts learning rather than addressing the full scope of the curriculum.

The three artistic processes – creating, performing and responding – offer a useful framework for designing assessment that measures how well students have mastered the Connecticut standards. In fact, the artistic process model was originally developed to provide a framework for the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the arts. Process-based assessments ask students to carry out the three processes and examine how well students can carry out each step of these processes. Because the student standards parallel the steps of the artistic processes, assessing student success on each step provides useful information about students' mastery of the standards. The performing arts – music, dance and theatre – use all three processes; visual art, which is not a performing art, uses only creating and responding.

Students who are able to carry out the artistic processes demonstrate exactly the kind of independent thinking that is sought by advocates of *authentic* assessment. For example, a student who can independently create – in music, dance, visual art, script writing or play making – begins by generating alternative ideas, making initial drafts, evaluating or refining each revision and finally presenting it to others. Determining whether students can apply this creative process should be a priority in any arts class. Assessment at all levels – national, state and local – should measure each student's capacity to independently carry out the three artistic processes.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Educators in the arts always have gone beyond the bounds of traditional pencil-and-paper testing. In fact, the current interest in performance assessment in other disciplines is partially due to the effectiveness of such procedures in the performing arts. The performing arts have a history of using performance assessments, such as public competitions and auditions which replicate the real world of the arts, and use audience inclusion and live demonstrations.

The visual arts have a tradition of assessment through portfolios. Portfolios traditionally have been used to gain entry into the professional art world and into advanced training institutions. More recently other disciplines, such as language arts and science, have introduced the portfolio process into their subject areas, and the performing arts are developing their own portfolios on audio and videotape.

The traditional focus on performance in the arts, however, often neglects the creative process and students' broader critical understanding of the art form in its cultural and historical context. Connecticut's program goals and standards call for a deeper and broader arts education, which must be reflected in its assessment systems. Arts educators must attempt to build assessments that authentically measure and monitor student achievement in all aspects of learning. Assessment tasks should represent, to the greatest extent possible, what takes place in art and dance studios, music and theatre rehearsal rooms, and arts classrooms across our state. To accomplish this, the tasks themselves should encompass a broad spectrum of practices: portfolio assessment, formative and summative assessment, peer and self-evaluation, and even traditional pencil-and-paper tests. A variety of practices is more likely to address the varied learning styles of students, allowing all to demonstrate what they have learned.

What is most imperative is that arts educators identify and clearly articulate the criteria being used for assessment. Appropriately communicating the measures for success to both students and parents not only alleviates confusion about grades, but also enables students to understand precisely where improvement is needed and exactly how it is to be achieved.

Among the strategies required for such assessment are portfolio assessment, using both *formative* and *summative* assessment, introducing peer and self-evaluation, and capturing the creative process in music, dance and theatre classes on video and audiotape. This does not mean that traditional multiple-choice or other paper-and-pencil tests should be completely abandoned. Nor does it reduce the need for day-to-day evaluation that is embedded in instruction. What is needed in assessment is a more holistic process presenting an authentic artistic

experience – perhaps a series of integrated tasks that are linked. This assessment also should be enriched by the inclusion of different learning styles, thus ensuring that all students have an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned.

PREPARING ASSESSMENT

When teachers are creating new assessment tasks and strategies to support their revised local curriculums they must be clear on two fundamental counts:

- the reason for the assessment; and
- the understandings and skills being assessed.

The reason for doing assessment can be altered according to the targeted audience. The assessment might be to provide students with informal feedback in one-on-one or class discussion; for discussion at a faculty meeting; or for a formal report to parents and/or school board members. The audience can radically affect the form of the assessment and the way in which the results are communicated. In every case it is essential that the learning objectives of the arts curriculums are described in sufficient detail so that they clarify the essential dimensions or criteria for the assessment tasks.

Assessment tasks should be designed to measure students' levels of mastery of the objectives outlined in the curriculum. For example, dance performance standard 1d at Grade 8 requires students to "transfer a rhythmic pattern from sound to movement." One task to assess student mastery of that standard would be to provide the prompt of a rhythmic pattern beaten on a drum and ask the student to reproduce that rhythm in a step pattern. The essential dimension (or criterion) for assessment is the extent to which the student is able to transfer the rhythm accurately into his or her own step pattern. The result will not be a straightforward "yes" or "no", because students' levels of success are likely to vary on a continuous scale from very strong to very weak. The teacher's task is to distinguish in clear language between these different possible levels of response. Ideally, the teacher should review students' work and select examples that illustrate various levels of performance on the task, including the level that meets the expectations of the curriculum. Simply assigning a grade to a student's work without revealing the criteria for assessment is not helpful to the students, their parents or other teachers.

The dance example just cited is a relatively straightforward assessment task because the results are

observable and measurable, but in some arts assessments, where interpretative responses are required, or where students' creative ideas are generated and developed, it is not as easy to identify such clear assessment criteria. For this reason some arts teachers have avoided the attempt to describe objective criteria for their arts assessments. But such a decision denies teacher and student the experience of fully analyzing and understanding what learning is taking place. Before embarking on an assessment task that requires a diverse range of responses from students, it is even more important for the teacher to explain very carefully to the students what he or she is looking for in the assessment process and which qualities of the finished work will be most valued in the evaluation.

Teachers should use both *formative* and *summative* evaluation. *Formative* assessment takes place every time a choral teacher rehearses an ensemble, a dance teacher makes a correction in body placement, a theatre teacher adjusts a student's vocal projection, or a visual arts teacher advises a student in the middle of the art-making process. Through formative, ongoing evaluation and feedback, teachers provide their students with frequent guidance and redirection. *Summative* assessment takes place at the end of a project or lesson when teachers need to know that the student has mastered the relevant knowledge and skill and can use them independently.

As teachers embark on the process of creating new *summative* assessment strategies for their students, the following characteristics will ensure the validity and usefulness of the assessments. Assessment tasks should:

- be meaningful, challenging, engaging and instructional for all students;
- be *authentic*, i.e., emphasize real-world applications in real-world contexts (simulating what real artists do or what is applicable to daily life);
- involve creating, performing and responding to art works;
- tap higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills;
- provide students with clear assessment criteria in advance of the assessment, preferably illustrated by examples of acceptable and outstanding student work;
- provide opportunities for critical review and revision; and
- include opportunities for student self-evaluation.

COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT LEARNING

Many strategies are available to teachers for collecting information about student learning. The following is a partial list:

Arts products, students journals, reaction letters/memos, research papers, group presentations, performances, peer evaluations, interview responses, self-evaluations, short or extended (essay) responses.

Observational, anecdotal records; audio performance records; students' work samples; video performance records; attitude inventories; computer hardware and software; synthesizers.

Examples of illustrative learning activities in which assessment strategies have been embedded may be found at the end of each discipline-specific section of Chapter 2 (2D, 2M, 2T and 2V). More fully elaborated assessment tasks, including scoring rubrics, may be found in Appendices G and H and at the website www.CTcurriculum.org

ASSESSMENT REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Student and Program Assessment

Arts PROPEL Project. Contact: Drew Gitomer, Educational Testing Service, Rosedale Road, Trenton, NJ 08541. Also: Harvard Project Zero, 326 Longfellow Hall, The Harvard Graduate School of Education, 13 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Council of Chief State School Officers. *Arts Education Assessment Framework and Arts Education Assessment and Exercise Specifications* for the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in arts education. Washington, DC: National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), 1994. (202) 357-6941. Can also be ordered or downloaded from NAGB website: <http://www.nagb.org/>

Minnesota Arts Assessment Project. Samples of assessment tasks in all four arts disciplines can be downloaded from site <http://children.state.mn.us/grad/gradhom.htm>

National Art Education Association. *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Arts Education*. Reston, VA: NAEA, 1995. (800) 299-8321.

Pomperaug Regional School District 15. *Performance-Based Learning and Assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996.

Shuler, Scott C. "The Effects of the National Standards on Assessment (and Vice Versa)." In *Aiming for Excellence: The Impact of the Standards Movement on Music Education*. Reston, VA: MENC, 1996, 81-108.

State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards in the Arts (SCASS/Arts). Contact Frank Philip, CCSSO, One Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431, (202) 336-7046.

Vermont Council on the Arts. *Vermont Arts Assessment Project: Focusing on the Nature of Artistic Practice in Learning*. Montpelier, VT: Vermont Council on the Arts, 1995. [Available from Vermont Council on the Arts, 136 State Street, Drawer 33, Montpelier, VT 05633-6001, (802) 828-3291.]

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Shuler, Scott. "Assessing Teacher Competence in the Arts – or – Should Mr. Holland Have Gotten the Gig?" In special focus issue on Teacher Assessment in the Arts of *Arts Education Policy Review* 98, no. 1 (September/October 1996): 11-15.

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Student Assessment

Brophy, Timothy. *Assessing the Child Musician*. Chicago, IL: G.I.A. Publications, 2000.

Davidson, Jennifer (ed.). *Assessment in General Music*. Video available for \$10 from Linda Erkkila, Video Services, Oakland Schools, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford, MI 48328, (313) 858-1985.

Music Educators National Conference. *Performance Standards for Music: Strategies and Benchmarks for Assessing Progress Toward the National Standards, Grades PreK-12*. Reston, VA: MENC, 1996, (800) 828-0229.

NYSSMA. *Assessment in Classroom Music*. Westbury, NY: NYSSMA, 1997. [Available for \$5 from NYSSMA, Office of Executive Administrator, 2165 Seaford Ave., Seaford, NY 11783-2730, (516) 409-0200.]

Shuler, Scott C. "The Effects of the National Standards on Assessment (and Vice Versa)." In *Aiming for Excellence: The Impact of the Standards Movement on Music Education*. Reston, VA: MENC, 1996, pp. 81-108.

Shuler, Scott C. "Assessment in General Music: Trends and Innovations in Local, State and National Assessment." In *Toward Tomorrow: New Visions for General Music*. Reston, VA: MENC, 1995, pp. 51-66.

Shuler, Scott C. and Connealy, Selena. "The Evolution of State Arts Assessment: From Sisyphus to Stone Soup." *Arts Education Policy Review* 100, no. 1 (September/October 1998): 12-19.

Shuler, Scott C. "Assessment in General Music: An Overview." In *The Orff Echo* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 10-12.

Program Evaluation

Lehman, Paul R. "Curriculum and Program Evaluation." In *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, Richard Colwell, ed. Reston, VA: MENC, 1992, pp. 281-294, (800) 828-0229.

Music Educators National Conference. *The School Music Program Evaluation* (SMPE), rev. 1996. Reston, VA: MENC, (800) 828-0229.

Teacher Assessment

Educational Testing Service. *The Praxis Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, (609) 921-9000.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. 26555 Evergreen Road, Suite 400, Southfield, MI 48076, (810) 351-4444.

Collins, Irma. "Assessment and Evaluation in Music Teacher Education." In special focus issue on Teacher Assessment in the Arts of *Arts Education Policy Review* 98, no. 1 (September/October 1996): 16-21.

Shuler, Scott C. "The Impact of National Standards on the Preparation, In-Service Professional Development and Assessment of Music Teachers." In *Arts Education Policy Review* 96, no. 3 (January/February 1995): 2-14, (800) 365-9753, x256.

Taebel, Donald K. "The Evaluation of Music Teachers and Teaching." In *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, Richard Colwell, ed. Reston, VA: MENC, 1992, pp. 310-329, (800) 828-0229.

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Teacher Assessment

Salazar, Laura. "Act IV: Theatre Teacher Assessment and Evaluation." In special focus issue on Teacher Assessment in the Arts of *Arts Education Policy Review* 98, no. 1 (September/October 1996): 27-31.

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Armstrong, Carmen. *Designing Assessment in Art*. Reston, VA: NAEA, 1994.

Beattie, Donna Kay. *Assessment in Art Education*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications, 1997.

Wilson, Brent. "Arts Standards and Fragmentation: A Strategy for Holistic Assessment." In *Arts Education Policy Review* 98, no. 2 (November/December 1997): 2-9.

Teacher Assessment

Educational Testing Service. *The Praxis Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, (609) 921-9000.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 26555 Evergreen Road, Suite 400, Southfield, MI 48076, (810) 351-4444.

Peterson, Joan. "Assessing Art Teachers." In special focus issue on Teacher Assessment in the Arts of *Arts Education Policy Review* 98, no. 1 (September/October 1996): 22-26.

Restrictions On Content: Religious Art And Censorship

The content of arts education can become controversial when members of the community believe that it is either too sacred or too profane.

- In the former instance, some may contend that including art inspired by religious themes – such as Christian carols at Christmastime – constitutes inappropriate mingling of church and state, or religion and public education. In response to such concerns, arts educators often point out that a large percentage of the world's greatest art work is inspired by religious themes, including the majority of work from certain styles and cultures, so excluding that work would deny students access to important learning opportunities.
- At the other extreme, some members of a community may feel that a particular piece of artwork students study or create – such as a play performed in theatre class, a dance choreographed by students or a painting created in the visual arts studio – is inappropriate.